

Greetings, Kazumi Suzuki, Minister of State for the National Land Agency

Greetings to the First Japan/U.S. Earthquake Policy
Symposium by Director Suzuki of the National Land Agency
September 16, 1996

I would like to say a few words of greeting on the occasion of the First Japan/U.S. Earthquake Policy Symposium held here in Washington D.C.

The First Japan/U.S. Earthquake Policy Symposium was proposed to President Clinton by former Prime Minister Murayama at a Japan U.S. summit conference held at the conference of leaders of the advanced nations in Halifax in June of last year, but another important factor in the decision to hold this symposium was the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster which occurred in and around Kobe Japan on January 17 of last year.

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake took the lives of more than 6,000 people, making it the most serious disaster to take place in Japan in half a century. The government of Japan immediately devoted all its resources to recovery work, and received generous support from the government and the people of the United States in the form of relief supplies, rescue teams, and encouragement. Thanks to you, the desperate efforts of Hyogo Prefecture, the City of Kobe, other regional governments, concerned organizations, and the

people themselves bore fruit, and the disaster region has steadily recovered. I would like to take this opportunity to once again express my gratitude to your government and to the citizens of the United States for their assistance.

Ironically, the Northridge Earthquake inflicted severe damage near Los Angeles exactly one year before the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster. It was an unfortunate coincidence, and it is extremely significant for the citizens of both our nations that representatives of two countries which suffered earthquake damage on this scale on the same day are holding this symposium to advance mutual cooperation in order to prepare for future earthquakes.

Based on the experience we gained as a result of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster, we are conducting broad-ranging studies encompassing the review of our protection systems in order to establish more effective disaster protection measures in Japan, and I hope that the lessons we learned from this experience will contribute to improved earthquake protection measures in countries throughout the world. At a Japan U.S. summit conference held in April of this year by President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto, the holding of this symposium was added to the common agenda of Japan and the United States. This step eloquently demonstrates not only that this symposium will benefit Japan

and the United States, but that cooperation by the two countries with the world's most advanced earthquake protection measures and their willingness to share their achievements in this field with other countries will bring benefits to earthquake prone countries in all parts of the world. I am confident that this symposium will make a big contribution to the creation of societies in which not only the people of Japan and the U.S., but people in other countries under the constant threat of disastrous earthquakes can enjoy safer lives in the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to a richly fruitful and significant symposium where all participants from both countries will express their views both frankly and enthusiastically during the next three days. I will now end my comments by wishing you all continued good health.